cuadernos de aleph

«¿DE QUÉ MATERIA ESTÁN HECHAS LAS AUSENCIAS?» THE DIVERSITY OF MOTHERHOODS, RELATIONAL NARRATION AND THE INTERPLAY OF INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF MISCARRIAGE AND ABORTION IN CONTEMPORARY SPANISH AND LATIN AMERICAN LITERATURE

«¿DE QUÉ MATERIA ESTÁN HECHAS LAS AUSENCIAS?» LA DIVERSIDAD DE LAS MATERNIDADES, LA NARRACIÓN RELACIONAL Y LA INTERACCIÓN ENTRE EXPERIENCIA INDIVIDUAL Y COLECTIVA EN EL CONTEXTO DEL ABORTO ESPONTÁNEO Y DEL ABORTO INDUCIDO EN LA LITERATURA ESPAÑOLA Y LATINOAMERICANA CONTEMPORÁNEA

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Abstract: This article examines four contemporary Spanish and Latin American texts that engage with abortion, miscarriage and reproductive loss as contested dimensions of a plural, non-linear understanding of motherhood —and of its deliberate refusal—. The argument unfolds across texts that differ markedly in genre, ideological position and national context: Paula Bonet's autofictional works *Roedores. Cuerpo de embarazada sin embrión* and *Los diarios de la anguila* explore miscarriage as a poetics of tension between life and death, private grief and collective resonance; the anthology *Maternidades cuir*, edited by Gracia Trujillo and Eva Abril, opens motherhood onto queer kinship, technologised reproduction and the grief of selective reduction; Dahiana Belfiori's *Código Rosa* foregrounds abortion as a legitimate form of (non-)motherhood and collective feminist practice; while Sara Martín García's *Yo aborté* illuminates, through its anti-abortion framing, the structural power of shame, victimhood rhetoric and moral normativity in organising reproductive narration. The article argues that what unites these otherwise divergent texts is their shared insistence on the relational and collective dimensions of reproductive experience: against the social organisation of

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silence that surrounds abortion and miscarriage, they inscribe private loss into networks of female genealogy, intersubjectivity and collective voice.

Keywords: motherhoods, miscarriage and abortion, relational narration, autofiction, contemporary Spanish and Latin American literature.

Resumen: Este artículo examina cuatro textos españoles y latinoamericanos contemporáneos que abordan el aborto, espontáneo e inducido, y la experiencia reproductiva como dimensiones en disputa de una comprensión plural y no lineal de la maternidad —y de su rechazo deliberado—. El análisis se desarrolla a través de textos que difieren significativamente en género, posición ideológica y contexto nacional: los textos autoficcionales de Paula Bonet *Roedores. Cuerpo de embarazada sin embrión* y *Los diarios de la anguila* exploran el aborto espontáneo como una poética de la tensión entre vida y muerte, dolor privado y resonancia colectiva; la antología *Maternidades cuir*, editada por Gracia Trujillo y Eva Abril, abre la maternidad hacia el parentesco queer, la reproducción tecnologizada y el duelo por la reducción selectiva; *Código Rosa* de Dahiana Belfiori sitúa el aborto como forma legítima de (no-)maternidad y práctica feminista colectiva; mientras que *Yo aborté* de Sara Martín García ilumina, a través de su encuadre antiabortista, el peso estructural de la vergüenza, la retórica de la victimización y la normatividad moral en la organización de la narración reproductiva. El artículo sostiene que lo que une estos textos, a pesar de sus marcadas diferencias, es su insistencia común en las dimensiones relacionales y colectivas de la experiencia reproductiva: frente a la organización social del silencio que rodea al aborto y la pérdida gestacional, estos textos inscriben el dolor privado en redes de genealogía femenina, intersubjetividad y voz colectiva.

Palabras clave: maternidades, aborto espontáneo y aborto inducido, narración relacional, autoficción, literatura contemporánea española y latinoamericana.

1. INTRODUCTION: «EL RELATO DE LA MATERNIDAD ES, NECESARIAMENTE, EL RELATO DE UNA PREGUNTA»

Motherhood is not a neutral term. It is a highly contested cultural and social field: a fabric of images, narrative and perceptual patterns, legal frameworks and normatively driven expectations that has an enormous impact, above all, on women's bodies, identities, resources and much more. Between ideas such as the *mater dolorosa*, the *madre abnegada* and the *ángel del hogar*, guiding figures have emerged over centuries that determine what a *good* mother is meant to be, what care is supposed to mean, which forms of sacrifice are treated as self-evident, and where deviation begins. At the same time, since the twentieth century, and especially since the 1960s, these stereotypical attributions have come under pressure. The liberation of women from their long-enforced «cautiverio de las […] [m]adresposas» (Lagarde y de los Ríos, 2011) or their «triple destiny» (Tebben, 1998: 14) as wife, housewife, and mother, is part of a conflict-ridden history that does not simply move in the direction of

emancipation. For alongside the pluralisation of ways of life, ideals of motherhood, family concepts and reproductive possibilities, the present has also seen a renewed appeal of traditional role scripts, for instance in the tradwife movement on social media, in the appropriation of motherhood by the New Right, or in neoliberal logics of self-optimisation that once again privatise and naturalise care. It is precisely this simultaneity, opening and re-attachment, pluralisation, deconstruction and re-traditionalisation that makes the topic so compelling and so urgent.

The reality of motherhood can take many different forms. Conceptually, I would therefore suggest that we turn our attention explicitly to *motherhoods* in the plural: to motherhoods as a polyphonic, non-linear, at times fractured mode of experience, one that encompasses different realities and competing claims to interpretation and, precisely by doing so, renders stereotypes visible and challenges them. In my understanding, this means moving away from an ideal type and towards relationality, difference, alternative forms, ambivalences and also conflict. In the words of the Argentine poet Juana Roggero: «[e]l relato de la maternidad es, necesariamente, el relato de una pregunta. Ya no hay principios rígidos ni definiciones, solo atisbos de imágenes que multiplican la interrogación» (2020: 259).

Among these non-linear and non-ideal-typical forms of motherhood are, alongside many others, forms of pregnancy that do not conform to the ideal, namely abortion, miscarriage, and related experiences. Luc Boltanski has shown with clarity that abortion remains culturally marginalised even though it is omnipresent: it is «universally known as a possibility»[1] and at the same time «an object of reprobation» (2004: 30, 38). The same can surely be said of miscarriage. It is therefore no coincidence that Bard (2008: 4), discussing women's experiences of abortion, speaks of a «silent majority» of women, a history of shame. This paradoxical visibility within invisibility or invisibility within visibility, the fact that abortion is known to all, practised, and yet still shrouded in silence, has begun to crack in recent years. Recent abortion narratives open up a discursive space and make speakable an experience that has long been stigmatised or condemned to silence. Annie Ernaux, who has written one of the most impactful texts of our time about abortion, transfers this almost into a claim and an obligation for her as a writer: «[i]f I do not think through the relational dimension of this experience consistently to its very end, I contribute to obscuring the reality of women» (2011: 291).

[1] Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from French and German are my own.

Florian Lützelberger (2026), «"¿De qué materia están hechas las ausencias?" The diversity of motherhoods, relational narration and the interplay of individual and collective experience in the context of miscarriage and abortion in contemporary Spanish and Latin American literature», *Cuadernos de Aleph*, 20, pp. 67-94.

These non-normative reproductive experiences are not only personal or cultural events; they are also, in Foucault's sense, biopolitical ones. In *La volonté de savoir*, Foucault proposes the term *bio-politique* to designate that which «makes life and its mechanisms enter the domain of explicit calculations and makes power-knowledge an agent of transformation of human life» (Foucault, 1976: 188). Biopower, he argues, organises itself around two poles —the disciplining of individual bodies and the regulation of populations— which together constitute «the two poles around which the organisation of power over life has been deployed» (1976: 183). Abortion and miscarriage sit precisely at the intersection of these two axes: they are simultaneously intimate bodily experiences and objects of legal, medical and demographic regulation. The literary texts examined in this article can be read as counter-discourses to this biopolitical organisation, as attempts to wrest the meaning of reproductive loss from the domain of state calculation and return it to the speaking, experiencing subject.

The scholarly interest in these questions has grown considerably across the last decade, driven in part by the wider cultural and political visibility of feminist reproductive politics —the *marea verde* movements in Argentina and beyond— and the concurrent boom in women's writing about motherhood and reproductive experience on both sides of the Atlantic. Within Hispanic literary studies, critical attention to abortion and miscarriage as literary subjects remains relatively recent and still developing. For the Spanish context, Olga Albarrán Caselles's monograph *(Pro)creación. Escritura y maternidad en la España contemporánea* (2022) offers the most sustained literary-critical study of gestational writing to date, examining how contemporary Spanish women authors have textualised procreative experience through autofiction, diary writing and personal chronicle, and arguing that reproduction has long occupied a peripheral place in the cultural canon despite being central to women's lives. Astorino, Saporosi and Zicavo (2017) had earlier opened similar terrain for Argentine literature, analysing the sociocultural representations of motherhood and voluntary abortion in Argentine fiction across the period 2006-2009 and demonstrating how literary texts both reflect and resignify dominant social discourses on the subject. More recently, Fernanda Bustamante Escalona's work has provided the most sustained panoramic survey of the literary narration of abortion in contemporary Latin American women's fiction: her article «"Legal, seguro y gratuito": el aborto voluntario en obras ficcionales de autoras latinoamericanas actuales» (2024) maps the frequency with which clandestinity, class and marginalisation structure these representations, while observing that texts narrating abortion

outside a logic of trauma and dramatic consequence remain comparatively rare; and her earlier study «"Somos las nietas de las brujas que no pudieron quemar": aborto, brujas, parteras, interseccionalidad y soro/doloridad en textos ficcionales de autoras latinoamericanas actuales» (2023) brings an intersectional, decolonial feminist framework to three texts in which the figure of the abortionist midwife-witch is central, showing how literary representations of abortion are inseparable from interlocking oppressions of gender, class, race and age. The present article contributes to this body of work by placing Spanish and Latin American texts in explicit dialogue by focusing specifically on abortion and miscarriage as constitutive —rather than exceptional— dimensions of motherhood; and by paying particular attention to the collective and relational forms and perspectives through which these experiences are narrated and made sharable. It is also notable that this body of writing is characterised, across both the Spanish and Latin American contexts, by a sustained generic instability: the texts in question tend to oscillate between fiction and testimony, autobiography and invention, consistently exploiting the proximity of faction and fiction as a formal strategy through which the intimacy and authenticity of reproductive experience can be claimed without foreclosing its literary and imaginative dimensions.

In what follows, I would like to examine these interrelations in somewhat greater detail through four texts. At the centre stands a more extensive reading of Paula Bonet's *Roedores. Cuerpo de embarazada sin embrión* (2018) and *Los diarios de la anguila* (2022), which serves as an exemplary case of how miscarriage, perspectives on motherhood and collective femininity are intertwined in contemporary autofictional narratives. Three further, briefer readings then build on and expand this analysis: Gracia Trujillo and Eva Abril's anthology *Maternidades cuir* (2020), which brings queer kinship and non-normative motherhoods into the conversation; Dahiana Belfiori's *Código Rosa. Relatos sobre abortos* (2015), a Latin American collection that foregrounds the collective and relational dimensions of the abortion experience; and Sara Martín García's *Yo aborté* (2005), an explicitly anti-abortion «testimony» collection which, precisely through its ideologically overdetermined framing illuminates from the other side how powerfully shame, coercion and normative moral semantics can shape the narration of reproductive experience. Together, these four texts —drawn from different national contexts, generic forms, ideological positions and historical moments— allow the article to map the range of discursive strategies through which contemporary Hispanic writing negotiates the tension between private experience and collective intelligibility,

between individual loss and the social structures that determine how that loss can be narrated, framed and assigned meaning.

2. «¿DE QUÉ MATERIA ESTÁN HECHAS LAS AUSENCIAS?»: ABORTION AND MISCARRIAGE IN CONTEMPORARY SPANISH-LANGUAGE TEXTS

2.1. Paula Bonet's *Roedores. Cuerpo de embarazada sin embrión* (2018) and *Los diarios de la anguila* (2022): Miscarriage as «Another Reality of Motherhood»

Among the most interesting voices who turn to abortion and miscarriage as realities of the reproductive body and of the societies surrounding it is the Catalan illustrator and author Paula Bonet —who, if we believe Anna Maria Iglesia «rompe el tabú» (2018: n.p.). Her work is shaped by her own experience of two miscarriages. Her texts can, much like those of Ernaux, be assigned to the category of autofictional writing, as she plays with the proximity to her empirical self. At times, she herself even finds it difficult to distinguish reality and fiction in her work: «[h]ay un momento en que soy incapaz de separarlo» (Iglesia, 2018: n.p.). And yet autofiction has given Bonet a way of breaking her silence: «[h]e necesitado la ficción para poder narrarme. Para mí, la literatura y la ficción han sido revelación» (Sánchez Alcolea, 2021: n.p.). In *Los diarios de la anguila* she becomes even more explicit: «abrí mis cajitas de muñeca rusa, abracé bien fuerte al yo con el que más cruel había sido» (Bonet, 2022: 319), and likewise «[a] todas las mujeres que había sido» (2022: 318).

For Bonet, the loss of a foetus is «una realidad más de la maternidad», as *El Periódico* (2021: n.p.) puts it, another reality of motherhood worth being narrated, one that must not remain subject to taboo. She closes the central section of «Mientras camino», an inserted essay in *Los diarios de la anguila*, with the sentence «Maternidades-paz-pintura, escribo ahora» (Bonet, 2022: 328), which condenses three pillars of her work: through art, Bonet sets out on a path of reclaiming herself in order to arrive at peace. In doing so, she emphasises the diversity of motherhood, which is not exhausted by the birth of a living child but also includes experiences such as miscarriage. The antithesis, the tension and the simultaneous co-presence of life and death in motherhood become structuring elements of Bonet's visual and literary work alike.

Bonet had always affectionately called her unborn daughter «ratona» (Bonet, 2018a: 20). Even before the miscarriage she illustrated, and afterwards eventually published, the children's book *Roedores*, which, taking its cue from this pet name, is devoted to various rodents. It is sold only together with the very intimate text *Cuerpo de embarazada sin embrión*,

which contains not only diary entries full of pain and hope but also two letters addressed to the deceased foetuses. It thus carries hope and tragedy, light and shadow, but also a plurality of textures all at once. As we shall see, the same applies to Bonet's later work.

2.1.1. Aesthetic Negotiation, Shifts and Intimate Writing: *Cuerpo de embarazada sin embrión* and the Diary Entries in *Los diarios de la anguila*

It is striking that Bonet, like Annie Ernaux in *L'événement*, draws on textual forms marked above all by privacy and intimacy. The letters to the deceased foetuses contained in *Cuerpo de embarazada sin embrión* are, in the first instance, addressed only metaphorically to a recipient who will never actually read them. The letter is thus referenced as a medium in order to generate intimacy within the horizon of an expected communication that never took place, yet that very horizon is shattered by the autofitional frame and by the reader's knowledge that the recipient, the foetus, is dead. In this way, the epistolary «I» becomes both sender and recipient at once. Only through publication within the volume do these most intimate tones acquire a wider resonance, a recipient. The diary entries, too, are characterised above all by a similarly staged privacy that permits the articulation of the most painful images. Frank Wanning identifies the possibility of «chronological order» as the central characteristic of the diary, and continues: «[t]he diary, as a literary form, can moreover adapt itself to inner-worldly experience» (2005: 120), thereby being able to create and external order where no interior one exists.

Los diarios de la anguila already announces its design as an intimate diary in its title and is also equipped with several characteristic structural features, such as basic dating as well as chronological arrangement and numbering of the texts. Bonet also orders *Cuerpo de embarazada sin embrión* chronologically. The volume opens with a double page announcing the month of May (Bonet, 2018a: 8) and ends with «Diciembre» (Bonet, 2018a: 24).

Yet the truly structuring element is another one entirely, for the pages are marked by a particular tension. The generic convention of the diary is overwritten. The tension between life and death, and indeed their simultaneity, is fixed in textual form. Especially in the first half of the volume, pages evoking life and death alternate, although every evocation of life and pregnancy, in relation to the reader's knowledge about the death of the foetus, also always implies the theme of death *ex negativo*, sometimes even explicitly:

Life/Death	Examples
Death	«No tiene puta idea de que la huérfana de hija soy yo. […] Su nombre y su cáncer genital anotados en la primera página» (Bonet, 2018a: 13).

Life	«La obsesión por la idea de volver a quedarme preñada me inmoviliza. Leo libros y artículos sobre la maternidad tardía» (Bonet, 2018a: 16).
Death	«A mi abuelo lo enterramos junto a mi abuela» (Bonet, 2018a: 17).
Life	«La última vez que tomé un avión estaba embarazada de dos meses y cualquier mínima turbulencia disparaba un alarma» (Bonet, 2018a: 20).
Death	«Muchas mujeres sufren abortos espontáneos con dolores terribles, algunas pierden muchísima sangre» (Bonet, 2018a: 21).

Figure 1: Examples of life/death alternation in Bonet's work.

Only from the moment of the foetus's death and the subsequent medical intervention, which is condensed in the sentence «[t]uvieron que sacármela» (Bonet, 2018a: 22), occupying an entire page of its own and thus claiming the space required by the weight of this event, does this alternation end, and from then on the theme of death predominates.

Looking further into language, on the metaphorical level, too, clear parallels can be traced in the texts of both Annie Ernaux and Paula Bonet. Even their most intimate writing seems so powerfully shaped by the experience of miscarriage and abortion and the social expectations around them that a shift in speaking takes place. As Ernaux's (2011: 279) narrator herself explains on a meta-level, what is striking in these notes is the absence of terms such as «enceinte» («pregnant») or «grossesse» («pregnancy»). In their place come vague circumlocutions such as «cette chose-là» («that thing»), as though even the most intimate writing were affected by taboo. Instead, Ernaux adopts an oblique mode of speaking that also attempts, as far as possible, to suppress emotion.

A shift in speaking about miscarriage can also be found in Bonet, though it is quite different to Ernaux's. Rather than resorting to a neutral discourse, she lays claim to intimacy and tenderness and thus attempts to make this marginalised reality of motherhood describable, to remove its stigma and to invest it with emotion. Without having to state the cruelty of the experience directly, she draws on a number of metaphors and euphemisms from the animal world. On the one hand, she returns to the pet name «ratoncita» (Bonet, 2018a: 21); on the other, she softens death twice through related images. The process of dying is narrated calmly and is thereby stripped, to a certain degree, of its cruelty: «[p]ero al ratón se le paró el corazón y se quedó allí dentro, quieto, mudo. Como si no quisiera molestar» (Bonet, 2018a: 20). The atmosphere of calm that Bonet creates through the accumulation of adjectives and verbs is taken up once more on the following page, when the deceased foetus is transformed from a mouse into a bear in hibernation: «[m]i ratoncita estaba allí quieta, como una osa silenciosa en hibernación» (Bonet, 2018a: 21). Yet this

analogy also deprives the child's death of its finality. Bonet, too, cannot quite bring herself to name it fully for what it is. Perhaps the child will awaken from hibernation after all.

Also noteworthy are the two letters to the imagined future and living versions of the two foetuses with which the volume closes. Without any further transition, the diary-like structure ends with the volume's only illustration, an abstract form in red watercolour which nevertheless clearly represents an embryo (Bonet, 2018a: 43). As if marking the separation between the two parts of the work, this insertion highlights the exceptional status of the letters.

Figure 2: Watercolour painting of an embryo in *Cuerpo de embarazada sin embrión* (Bonet, 2018a: 43).

The first letter is devoted to the first pregnancy and addressed to «[q]uerida hija o hijo», the second to «[q]uerida hija» (Bonet, 2018a: 43 y 45). Both are full of hope and addressed to the foetuses that the empirical author was presumably still carrying at the time of writing. She writes with anticipation in the future tense and cannot wait for each child's arrival. In the second letter, for instance, she says: «[a] mis ojos serás el ser humano más bello y perfecto» (Bonet, 2018a: 49). The empirical author will later lose both pregnancies through «abortos espontáneos» (Viéitez, 2018), which turns these imagined futures into bitter wishful thinking; wishes that will never be fulfilled. In the first letter, the «I/Yo» speaks about the beauty of the arts, Rodin's *La Porte de l'Enfer* and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (Bonet, 2018a: 43) which she wants to show to her future child. The promise «te prometo que escucharemos

la belleza juntas» sadly remains an empty one, and at this point the «I/Yo» does not yet know that she herself will soon be standing before her very own hell's gate (Bonet, 2018a: 43).

The second letter acquires a similar bitterness. The «I/Yo» tells the child she is carrying about an illustration and a text she has prepared for her: «Hoy te he escrito y te he pintado un cuento. […] Uno lleno de ratas y ratones. Lo leeremos juntas dentro de un año» (Bonet, 2018a: 45). Once again, Bonet formulates a promise that will come to nothing. The tragedy is pushed further still when an entire paragraph assembles the daughter out of individual bodily fragments and imagines how the embryo should gradually develop in the womb, step by step. That, too, will never become reality:

> Hoy he leído que en estos días tres capas distintas de células se están construyendo. Tus sistemas nervioso y digestivo y tu hígado, tus pulmones, corazón y músculos, tus riñones, órganos reproductores y huesos, pelo y piel, y tus ojos (Bonet, 2018a: 45).

This «proceso […] mágico» ultimately does not take place, and the letters end the volume, in the full knowledge of this, leaving a very bitter aftertaste (Bonet, 2018a: 45).

2.1.2. Raw Visual Violence vs the Tenderness of Animal Motifs: The Illustrations and Collages of *Los diarios de la anguila* and *Roedores*

Set against the often gentle and intimate tones of the textual dimension of Bonet's work are the much harsher and rawer illustrations and other visual elements that she incorporates into it. Here again, the basis is the opposition and simultaneity of life and death that we have already identified as fundamental to her work and that is inscribed both into textuality and into visuality. The world of images is inseparable from the theme of death. Even a cursory leafing through the *Diarios* leaves no doubt about this: grey, black, and ochre dominate the colour spectrum, and the portraits of people that Bonet produces on her journeys to Marrakesh and Santiago de Chile make the figures appear almost like living dead.

Bonet (2022: 138-47) also uses the same palette to integrate a series of dead birds into the volume. In the text, they are not treated thematically but merely described in technical terms as «[e]studio de […] dibujo en tinta y sepia» (Bonet, 2022: 146). She, however, in the paratext, establishes the connection to the American-Romanian artist André Racz, whose work, according to Arthur Coleman Danto (1998: 65), much like Bonet's own, can above all be grasped through the combination of «strength and delicacy». In his work as well one finds many images of life, but also images of death, most prominently the motif of the dead bird to which Bonet alludes.

Figure 3: Example of a watercolour painting of a dead bird in *Los diarios de la anguila* (Bonet, 2022: 138).

A fourth and quite obvious colour in Bonet's work is dark red, which she uses in two different ways. In the portraits, especially of women, the flowing black and red tones create the impression of bruises and bloodshot eyes. Since violence of all kinds against women is one of the other central themes of Bonet's *oeuvre* as a whole, this use of colour can without doubt also be read in that direction. The empirical author herself has experienced psychological violence and stalking, which led her not only to withdraw from public life from 2022 onwards, but also to process these experiences particularly in her novel *La anguila* and the *Diarios de la anguila*.

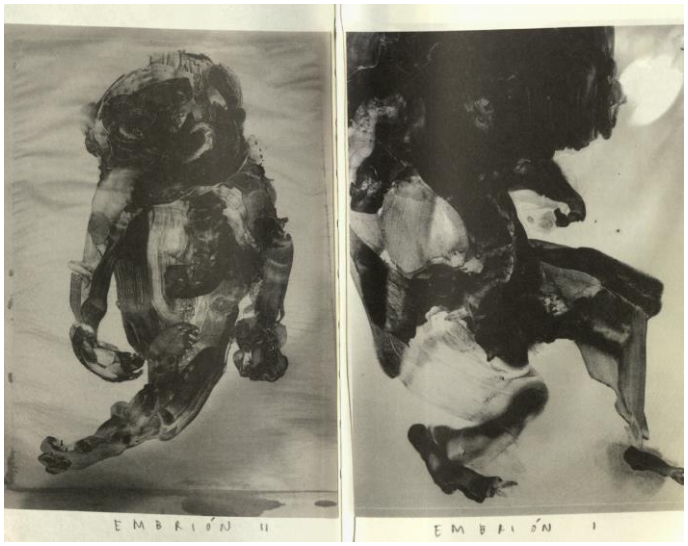

Figure 1: Two of the very many examples of embryos and foetuses in *Los diarios de la anguila* (Bonet, 2022: 226-227).

Let us return, however, to the images in *Los diarios de la anguila*. Alongside the pale and lifeless faces and the dead birds, one further complex linked to the colour red stands out in particular. The volume contains numerous relatively explicit watercolours, but also photographs, prints and collages of foetuses. In this context as well, the dark red primarily embodies blood, visually dominating the event of miscarriage. The «embriones malformados o bebés que fallecerán pronto», as Bonet (2022: 327) herself puts it, are undoubtedly part of the exploration of her innermost self and the repressed spheres of the self, as she explains in her poetological reflections. At the same time, they generate a kind of shock effect, confronting readers with what they had until then only been imagining. This makes them more than mere illustration.

I would like to conclude this section with a glance at the animal images in *Roedores*. As in the textual part of *Cuerpo de embarazada sin embrión*, Bonet's illustrative work also spans the arc between life and death. The birds of *Los diarios de la anguila* are set against the rodents of the children's book *Roedores*, an accordion-folded picture book that portrays various rodents and offers short texts conveying information or comments about them.

Figure 5: Some of the rodents from *Roedores*, including the nutria and the rat (Bonet, 2018b).

At first sight, these illustrations appear unremarkable and clearly oriented towards a child audience. We find rodents such as the beaver, the squirrel or the chinchilla. Added to this are basic pieces of information on size, habitat, food and so on, formulated in simple language suitable for children.

On closer inspection, what is striking is that almost all the rodents have lively eyes in which the light is reflecting. Only two exceptions emerge in this regard: the rat and the female

nutria. In their eyes, no light is reflected, which subtly suggests a link to death. In the case of the rat, the interpretation is obvious: it is connected to the deceased «ratoncita» and thus marked by the first miscarriage (Bonet, 2018a: 21). In the case of the nutria, the link becomes clear because she is pregnant and a «pequeña nutria» can be seen in her uterus, perhaps the animal counterpart to the second deceased foetus (Bonet, 2018b). As with the rat, the text itself contains nothing pointing explicitly to death, and without knowing that *Roedores* is sold only together with *Cuerpo de embarazada sin embrión*, as well as without knowledge of the author and illustrator's thematic engagement with the topic, such an interpretation would remain somewhat distant. Yet once this context is known, the attentive observer can also find in these innocent illustrations life and death, hope and pain, tenderness and rawness once again.

2.1.3. Individual Experience and Collective Dimensions

As a last aspect in Bonet's work, I would like to speak briefly about the collective dimension of it. The inserted texts «El cuerpo silenciado» and «Mientras camino» in *Los diarios de la anguila* are particularly relevant here. On a first level, the topic of pregnancy loss is not the most important in them; instead, they offer a rather broad poetological and gender-oriented reflection around the female body. «El cuerpo silenciado» is a handwritten passage located almost exactly in the middle of the volume. Bonet does not insert a fully elaborated essay here, but rather a series of notes that seem associatively placed, a kind of stream of consciousness. But pregnancy and loss do indeed play a role in there: the author reflects on «transformación interior y exterior» pregnancy causes, speaks of a «guerra […] contra el propio cuerpo» after pregnancy and of expectations of a «cuerpo utópico» (Bonet, 2022: 201) that are above all socially and culturally constructed —to be back to one's old shape shortly after giving birth or just going on with life after a miscarriage for example—. According to Bonet, these social expectations ultimately lead women, through the impossibility of fulfilling them, to negate themselves and to become incapable of loving themselves. She formulates the following list of consequences, one that carries intergenerational and extra-familial relationality:

> Cuando una mujer se ve obligada —culturalmente— a rechazar su cuerpo está negando:
>
> – sus orígenes
> – su pasado y su futuro
> – los cuerpos de sus abuelas
> – el cuerpo de su madre
> – el que tendrá su hija

– la vida que ha vivido

→ se niega a sí misma (Bonet, 2022: 202).

These collective expectations are also transferred onto individual expectations of one's own body. We learn this from a letter to the gynaecologist included in *Cuerpo de embarazada sin embrión*. The text makes almost tangible the enormous self-doubt and anxiety that such an experience can bring with it. The intensity of the event leads Bonet to a kind of flight from reality, coupled with an obsession with becoming pregnant again very shortly after the pregnancy loss:

> He estado refugiándome en la idea de que al quedarme embarazada en sólo tres meses debo de ser fértil, pero después de todo lo vivido desde el legrado empiezo a pensar que es una mentira que me he contado para no volverme loca. ¿Puedo haberme quedado embarazada pero que mis óvulos no sean todo lo fértiles que deberían? ¿Puede que fuera una especie de "carambola"? (Bonet, 2018a: 26).

This can likely be understood as a kind of coping strategy. The idea of overwriting the previous miscarriage through a rapid subsequent pregnancy, of almost rendering it undone, hovers in the background as a utopian expectation directed at her own body. In the state of extreme psychological strain that this experience produces, however, this perspective alternates in an almost manic fashion with self-doubt and doubt about her fertility, becoming a kind of downward spiral that calls both the body and the self into question. Bonet argues that these doubts remain present until women reclaim their own bodies from the external expectation: «hasta que no recupere su propio cuerpo no podrá amarse a ella y a su historia» (Bonet, 2022: 203). She does not yet offer concrete solutions, but the thrust of her reflections and demands is clear.

She addresses similar issues in «Mientras camino», an essay placed at the very end of *Los diarios de la anguila*. In this text, however, she searches for concrete ways out of this female predicament and chooses the arts as an instrument of escape and processing, particularly in connection with a female community and solidarity among women. She comments: «juntas podríamos hacer cosas magníficas» (Bonet, 2022: 306). She describes her studio as «un lugar de reunión de mujeres que usan la imagen y la palabra para enfrentarse a partes de ellas mismas que habían enterrado en lugares profundos» (2022: 303). She thus links her own creative work with that of other women and her individual experience of miscarriage with the traumatic experiences of other women. The individual and the collective are intertwined. This is only one facet, though perhaps the most significant one, of a broader poetological

and aesthetic metadiscourse running through *Los diarios de la anguila*. Again and again, Bonet takes us into her studio. The volume contains, for instance, instructions on algraphy as a printmaking technique, as well as visual glimpses into the production process of her series «No hay latido», in which she works through her miscarriages.

Concrete female collaboration is, however, only one of the two factors she names. A second step for Bonet consists rather in writing a genealogy of brilliant creative women and inscribing herself into it. Instead of continuing a familial genealogy, she here gives form to an expanded idea of relationality. She writes a creative genealogy instead. Therefore, in the middle of the essay, we find a list containing names such as Jane Austen, Emily Dickinson, Gabriela Mistral or Rosa Montero, mostly childless women or women for whom motherhood was anything but straightforward:

> […]
> Jane Austen
> Diana Bellessi
> Emily Brontë
> Marta Brunet
> Emily Dickinson
> Mariana Enriquez
> Elvira Fernández
> Louisa May Alcott
> Katherine Mansfield
> Gabriela Mistral
> Rosa Montero
> Silvina Ocampo
> Dorothy Parker
> Cristina Peri Rossi
> Alejandra Pizarnik
> Katherine Anne Porter
> Anaïs Nin
> Carson McCullers
> Katherina Hepburn
> Norah Lange
> Marta Sanz
> Armonía Somers
> Gertrude Stein
> Alfonsina Storni
> Josefina Vicens
> Marguerite Yourcenar
> (Bonet, 2022: 325-326).

These passages show with particular clarity that Bonet never thinks of pregnancy loss as a purely private, self-contained experience. The entanglement of individual and collective dimensions in Bonet's work connects her to a broader tendency that Bustamante Escalona identifies in Latin American women's writing and activism of the same period: they can be understood as a political act of making public what has long been consigned to the private

sphere, of speaking «en voz alta y colectivamente, ya no en el ámbito privado» (Bustamante Escalona, 2024: 240) about abortion and loss.

Her writing is instead governed by a relational logic. The autofictional I appears as an individual voice, but it is always interwoven with other bodies, other women, and other stories. In her dissertation, Hannie Lawlor has described autofictional writing by observing that every voice is «individual and autonomous», yet also that «any one life story is made up of multiple others, shaped by the many lives with which it intersects» (2024: 3). This is precisely what we find in Bonet when, in «El cuerpo silenciado», she writes that the culturally enforced rejection of one's own body always also negates one's «orígenes», «los cuerpos de sus abuelas», «el cuerpo de su madre», or «el que tendrá su hija» (Bonet, 2022: 202). Loss therefore never affects only an isolated I, but an entire network of relations.

In this context, Bonet's texts, and texts on abortion and miscarriage more broadly, exceed the familial frame. Whoever writes about loss always writes, inevitably, about female ancestors and possible female descendants, but also inscribes herself into a female genealogy of women who have previously had abortions or suffered losses, who are doing so in the present, or who will do so in the future. Such texts write, to follow Paul John Eakin, «not only the autobiography of the self but the biography and the autobiography of the other» (1999: 58). Annie Ernaux formulates it as follows: «I felt myself […] caught up in a chain of women through whom generations passed» (2011: 314-315), women whose stories are interconnected. To inscribe oneself into this genealogy resembles, to cite Hannie Lawlor (2024: 18) once more, a «balancing act» between relationality and autonomy. It is grounded in the singularity of one's own pain, without ever severing that pain from the experiences of other women. This is precisely where Bonet's texts derive their poetological and political force. They do not turn individual loss into a private matter, but into a nodal point within a larger web of female bodies, voices and stories.

2.2. Queer Motherhoods and Dissident Kinship in Gracia Trujillo's and Eva Abril's *Maternidades cuir* (2020)

Bonet, as I have already said, ends the central section of «Mientras camino» with the phrase «Maternidades-paz-pintura, escribo ahora» (Bonet, 2022: 328). The plural maternidades here once more ties in with what *El Periódico* (2021: n.p.) underscores in the phrase «una realidad más de la maternidad»: the plurality and diversity of motherhood, which does not exhaust

itself in the birth of a living and healthy child, but also integrates bodily, psychological and medical experiences such as miscarriage and abortion as legitimate parts of motherhood. I would like to take up this plural *maternidades* at once in order to move to another volume that already carries diversity in its title.

In the introduction to *Maternidades cuir*, Gracia Trujillo and Eva Abril frame the volume as a polyphonic project: «una compilación de voces de madres, trans* y cis, no heterosexuales y/o no heteronormativas» (2020: 15), a collection of autofictional writings on different non-traditional realities of motherhood. At the same time, the editors insist that the title is more than a label, that it opens up a perspective. The texts, they write, speak «de queerizar, de torcer, de tortillear, de atravesar, redefinir, cuestionar […] ese ideal de "maternidad" que nos encorseta y agobia» (15). The point is to tell «relatos de maternidades en plural» that «rompen con los paradigmas históricos de parentesco y filiación» (15). The introduction then becomes very concrete about what this shift entails. The book is intended as a «disparador» for speaking about «las formas diferentes de crianza, las familias, las elegidas y las que no elegimos, nuestras redes de cuidados» (15). At the same time, its claim is delimited: «este libro no pretende ser un catálogo, menú o suma de identidades», but rather «una compilación de múltiples batallas y resistencias» (16). The thematic spectrum is accordingly marked as a field of social and institutional conflicts: «los periplos para conseguirlo, con o sin técnicas de reproducción asistida», «las violencias institucionales» «en espacios como los registros y los hospitales», as well as «la escuela como máquina (re)productora de las normas sexogenéricas» (18), which in turn recalls some of the ideas formulated by the Chilean author Lina Meruane in her essay «Contra los hijos» (2014).

For Abril and Trujillo, then, the point is motherhoods that depart from traditional ideas and stereotypes, queer kinships, or, indeed, queer motherhoods. By queer kinships I mean, first of all, a field of research that analyses kinship not as a natural genealogy but as a social practice constituted through recognition, law, care and other factors. The classical point of reference is Weston's (1997) concept of *chosen* or *found families*: stable networks of relationships that organise belonging and support even where the biologically and legally privileged nuclear family is not able to provide these or is not available. Queer-kinship approaches are thus not limited to lesbian or gay families, but direct attention to non-heteronormative and non-traditional kinships, care systems and forms of family.

From this point, the step towards the concept of *maternidades cuir* can be made quite easily. *Cuir* names motherhoods that elude the normative scripts of motherhood, whether through care constellations, that is, through the question of who cares, who counts as a mother, and how motherhood is socially made, or through non-normative trajectories of pregnancy, birth and becoming a parent, through ruptures, interruptions, medically administered processes and ambivalent experiences and affects. This also includes regretting motherhood, for example. This breadth is programmatic within the volume itself, which uses *queer/cuir/kuir* as the term that most adequately captures the diversity of the motherhoods gathered here. *Maternidades cuir* therefore articulates and promotes a plural understanding of the realities of motherhood. It shows how motherhood becomes visible as a kinship practice precisely where the norm, for instance the two-parent model of family or reproduction as a linear success story, no longer holds or is actively subverted, and how, at the margins of that norm, new forms of belonging, care and narrative self-interpretation emerge.

Susana Cañete's «Hormonándome espero» is one of the texts included in *Maternidades cuir*. In autofictional form, it traces the long and complex journey towards parenthood within a lesbian relationship, a journey shaped by hormone treatment and assisted reproduction. The text links this deeply personal experiential account to a critique of the normative and institutional conditions under which lesbian motherhood becomes possible, or is made impossible in the first place.

As part of this journey, the narrator also describes an anembryonic pregnancy both as diagnosis and as existential experience: «[e]ra un embarazo anembrionario o huevo huero […]. Hubo que hacerme un legrado» (Cañete, 2020: 62). The medical terminology of the «huevo huero» empties out what had already been affectively filled with the hope of motherhood. Optimism is turned into emptiness. The procedure is not only a medical intervention, but a scene in which bodily autonomy and pain are negotiated. It also becomes clear that there are different ways of dealing with such experiences, and that an abortion, a miscarriage or a failure within reproductive medicine need not be a one-time event, but may happen repeatedly, each time opening up anew the question of how the affected woman will respond: «misoprostol […] Si tuviera que hacerme otro aborto, no las usaría» (Cañete, 2020: 62). In the same breath, repetition becomes an actual part of the narrator's biography: «[a]quel año tuve otro aborto, aunque menos dramático» (2020: 62). What matters here is that the text does not condense these events into a single exceptional drama, but renders their

chronicity visible: loss and abortion as series, as a year, as rhythm. Life is not organised along the one successful reproductive line, but around precarious, partly invisible episodes that nonetheless generate relationships, to oneself, to partners, to doctors, to communities and to political struggles, and that are part of the experience of motherhood.

At another point, the narrator speaks very clearly about this affective dimension: «[d]e las transferencias en Valencia he tenido dos positivos. Fueron dos abortos y eso fue lo más duro» (Cañete, 2020: 61). Kinship emerges here in a setting that is highly technologised and at the same time extremely intimate: hope begins to grow —in the most literal sense of a foetus growing, disappears again and returns—. From this perspective, motherhood is not identical with birth, but with the work of sustaining a relationship to oneself and to a prospective child, a relationship that can begin long before the child's birth and does not disappear even when the result fails to materialise. Another fragment from the collective volume condenses this paradox into a single sentence: «[p]or unos momentos estuve embarazada… pero no fue» (Sánchez Sáinz, 2020: 37).

The «momento» counts, and so does what it sets in motion. The sentence insists that pregnancy does not become legitimate only through duration. It claims a temporality that runs counter to normative logic: motherhood as a brief bodily state that was real, whose truth does not need to be guaranteed by continuation. Tamarin Norwood in *The Song of the Whole Wide World: On Grief, Motherhood and Poetry* offers a similar perspective, providing a brief point of comparison from the anglophone context. There, the narrator makes clear that the story is about «A baby and his mother», that it needs to be called *motherhood*, even though the story contains only «seventy-two minutes of life» (Norwood, 2024: back of the book) before the newborn dies.

Finally, Mercè Falguera Ríos's text «Madre y lesbiana: un camino en construcción. Trayectoria vital y experiencias lesbomaternales» is especially revealing in its treatment of the topic of a selective reduction in the case of a multiple pregnancy. The text discusses the decision in favour of reduction on account of medical risks while at the same time making its ethical and affective weight visible: the issue is to «reducir el número de sacos […] a dos (reducción embrionaria) […] en embarazos múltiples […] embarazos de riesgo» (Falguera Ríos, 2020: 106). The parenthetical insertion of the technical term shows the language in which such an event would normally be framed, a language that covers over the affective dimension. But the narrative does not remain at that point. It insists on grief work as a

constituent part of motherhood, precisely where society enforces silence: «[a]hora siento la necesidad de […] vivir ese duelo […] De esa situación no he hablado todavía con mis hijas, ni siquiera lo volví a hablar nunca más con mi ahora exesposa. Formó parte de nuestro secreto familiar y se hizo silencio» (2020: 107).

«Silencio» here is not only private speechlessness, but a social effect: a culture that refuses to recognise certain losses as grievable because they do not fit into the publicly legible success narrative of family or the canon of cases in which grief seems to be an eligible option. In this sense, queer kinships also means that grief, abortion and ambivalence are fundamentally acknowledged as legitimate realities of family and reproduction. This experience may not fit into a classical narrative of mourning, because it is an active decision taken in order to save two children, not a complete loss. And yet this kind of experience also has its place within the broad conception of *maternidades*.

The volume makes one thing unmistakably visible: abortions, anembryonic pregnancies, miscarriages and selective reductions are not mere marginal phenomena, but legitimate realities of motherhood. They are shaped by the relation to the unborn, briefly present, reduced or lost other, by confrontations with the self and with medical power, and they lay claim to grief and to serious engagement, just as the other forms of motherhood discussed in the volume do as well.

2.3. Relational Writing, Collective Voice and Legitimate Motherhood in Dahiana Belfiori's *Código Rosa. Relatos sobre abortos* (2015)

Next, I would like to turn to a current trend in the narration of abortion and loss, namely the gathering of individual voices within the collective form of anthologies and short-story collections. Individual experiences of abortion are thus directly placed in the context of the collective and made visible in their plurality. They do not stand in isolation, but side by side. They are a particularly interesting form of relational writing. Such collections are accessible as an archive for women looking for points of identification, but also for a broader public, in order to show that the realities of abortion and pregnancy loss are extremely diverse, and yet all of them are entirely legitimate. Interesting international examples include the German collections *(K)Eine Mutter: Abtreibung – Zwölf Frauen erzählen ihre Geschichte* (2020) and *Glückwunsch! 15 Erzählungen über Abtreibung* (2023), the Argentine volume *Dicen que tuve un bebe*

(2020) and the French collection *Interruption. L'avortement par celles qui l'ont vécu* (2022), to name only a few of the most interesting examples from recent years.

What I would like to discuss, however, is another volume from Argentina, published in 2015: *Código Rosa. Relatos sobre abortos* is a deliberately hybrid composition. It combines paratexts, prologue, contextualising chapters and an epilogue, with fictionalised *relatos* based on real interviews about accompanied abortions in Argentina; it is a kind of secondary autofictional writing. The dedication already sets the tone, for the volume seeks to inscribe itself into the history of all women who have undergone or will undergo an abortion: «a todas las que abortamos y seguiremos abortando» (Belfiori, 2015: 7). Selva Almada's prologue directs attention to questions of class and risk: some women have «un quirófano impecable y un médico matriculado», while others must «poner en riesgo [sus] vidas» (Almada, 2015: 10-11). The crucial aspect there is that a book like *Código Rosa* makes it possible to get to know «distintas historias, distintas razones» and to «comprender a cada una» (2015: 11).

The volume explains its own genesis with great transparency. In «¿Por qué Código Rosa?», the practice of the *Socorristas* is described as a telephone and support structure in Argentina: «un servicio que brinda información y acompañamiento […] a personas que deciden abortar con misoprostol» (Belfiori, 2015: 13). The material arises from more than twenty interviews conducted by Belfiori between 2012 and 2013. What she makes out of them are «relatos ficcionados», protecting identities while preserving and articulating voices, situations and reasons for the decision (2015: 13). Belfiori notes that the interviewees «no sólo hablaron de "sus" abortos, ahondaron en sus vidas» (14) and explicitly direct their narratives towards other women, wishing to connect their stories with those of others: «para que ayude a otras». Relationality is thus also the basis of this text. Abortion is narrated as an individual experience, as a bundle of life situations, relationships, anxieties, reliefs, feelings of guilt, pragmatic decisions, sometimes simply called «una cosa más de la vida» (16), but it is also narrated through many stories woven together and interconnected.

The first relato, «No te quiero», is particularly productive for the question of legitimate forms of motherhood because the text does not construct motherhood as the necessary and only possible consequence of every pregnancy. Rather, it makes visible that a pregnancy can also be refused without this being equivalent to a lack of care or responsibility. The narrator lives in a rural region with her family and several children, looks after domestic work and at the same time works as a midwife. Motherhood, then, is for her a very specific

experience and practice within an individual network of self-ascriptions and relationships. When she herself becomes pregnant again, however, this new pregnancy is understood as a rupture: «[v]a a estar todo bien, no te quiero ahora […] Preferimos que no vengas» (Belfiori, 2015: 23). The crucial sentence is: «[a]hora no quiero ser madre. No otra vez» (2015: 23). A decision against a new motherhood is thus a decision in favour of the motherhood already in existence and of the other care relationships that are already there.

What is striking here is the text's double ethics. On the one hand, the decision is strongly personalised; on the other, it is tied back to a practice of giving and accompanying. The narrator works in birth assistance and therefore has very concrete ideas about motherhood, emphasising that bodies are places of decision: «[h]acemos de nuestros cuerpos el lugar para albergar nuestras decisiones. Querer y no querer» (Belfiori, 2015: 24). The refusal of renewed motherhood is thus not narrated as a deficit, but as a legitimate and situated form of relation to oneself and as a decision made in light of one's own identity and an already existing family constellation. The fact that the protagonist at the same time allows grief, tears, and ritual, writing «Lloré sin culpa […] Yo parí mi aborto» (2015: 24), makes one thing clear: abortion appears neither as a pure narrative of triumph nor as a pure catastrophe, but as an act woven into an already existing life, a decision connected to the woman's confrontation with herself. Here, rejecting one motherhood is what safeguards another personal motherhood —and with that many other motherhoods as she will continue to work as a midwife and help others—.

The legitimacy of a non-motherhood in the narrower sense becomes more explicit in the relato «Por el inodoro», from which my title quotation «cuánta ausencia hay en toda maternidad» is drawn (2015: 42). Here, the sentence «[n]o soy madre» is not only a casual self-description, but a deliberately chosen identity after the abortion: «No soy madre. Aborté» (42). Abortion is not understood here as a facet of motherhood, but is actively framed as non-motherhood, another legitimate way to see oneself in this context and a legitimate understanding of abortion as a decision against any form of motherhood whatsoever.

Even in this narrative of non-motherhood, the entanglement of individual and collective experiences is emphasised: «[a]unque me sentí sola, también me sentí acompañada» —by the *Socorristas*—, who «existían al otro lado del teléfono», and at the same time through the narrator's sense of being connected to the fates, stories and decisions of many other women, not necessarily in the past but in the present —«[o]tras como yo estaban abortando

quizás al mismo tiempo» (Belfiori, 2015: 42)—. This inscription into a collective helps the protagonist overcome the doubt that abortion might have been a decision «contra su madre» —referring to the familial genealogy once again, or even «contra sí misma» (2015: 42)—, and helps her understand that non-motherhood is an equally legitimate form of identity. This is very similar to the tendency Bustamante Escalona identifies as central in her study on the fictional treatment of clandestine abortion in Latin American women's narrative: the emphasis falls not only on danger and illegality, but on «el acompañamiento y la transmisión de los saberes entre mujeres» (2023: 222) as a form of communal resistance.

2.4. Testimony, Stigma and Anti-Abortion Discourse in *Yo aborté. Testimonios reales de mujeres que han sufrido un aborto provocado en España* (2005) by Sara Martín García and the AVA[2]

A volume from Spain with a similar structure, collecting the voices of different women who have had abortions, works in precisely the opposite direction: *Yo aborté. Testimonios reales de mujeres que han sufrido un aborto provocado en España*. It is explicitly designed as an intervention against abortion. The volume does not present an open, pluralistic collection of heterogeneous experiences, but organises voices within a clear frame of interpretation. Abortion appears as a consequence of violence and also as an act of violence in itself, with clearly identifiable victims and a strongly predetermined moral semantics. Unsurprisingly, alongside Sara Martín García, the Spanish Asociación de Víctimas del Aborto is named as editor.

Martín García's prologue establishes three central framings. First, the possibility of abortion as a voluntary act is denied. The expression «aborto voluntario» is undermined through quotation marks in the original text and through the thesis that women in Spain have not aborted «libre y voluntariamente» since 1985, at least not according to the women whose testimonies were collected by the organisation (García Valdés, 2005: 15). By way of context, abortion in Spain had been legal since 1985 only in cases of rape, severe foetal impairment or danger to the pregnant woman's life. Liberalisation came only in 2010, five years after the volume appeared. Second, the prologue insists on the absence of «información veraz y completa» about the bodily and above all psychological consequences, as well as about alternatives to abortion (2005: 15).

[2] Asociación de Víctimas del Aborto.

Third, the prologue introduces the theme of silence, drawing here on the rhetoric of abortion advocates. Whereas pregnancy and birth produce recognition, abortion is followed by «Nada: el silencio» (García Valdés, 2005: 15). The book positions itself accordingly as a counter-space and wants to lend a helping hand. It seeks to «tenderles una mano» and to help women overcome «el dolor, el sentimiento de culpa, la soledad» (2005: 15). So far, so good. The collective dimension is thus present from the outset, but it is tightly constrained: not as pluralism, but as the perspective of an association that addresses those concerned as victims and presents only this perspective as legitimate.

What is most critical here is that the prologue stabilises a logic of victimhood that posits abortion as a structurally traumatising event, and that already in the dedication locates the «niño no-nacido» as the «primera víctima» (García Valdés, 2005: 16). As a result, alternative interpretations, feelings of ambivalence, relief, absence of regret, abortion as conscious self-determination or as protection from violence are systematically pushed to the margins. Here too, individual stories are meant to be linked together into a collective, but not for empowerment. Rather, they are marshalled for a supposed protection:

> Este es un libro diferente. En él, mujeres y hombres cuentan uno de los mayores dramas de su vida: el aborto. Algo que les ha marcado para siempre, y que no desean olvidar porque forma parte de ellos mismos. Y lo quieren contar para poder ayudar a otros; para que otros no hagan lo que ellos sí hicieron. (Martín García, 2005: 13).

This becomes exemplary in Lucía's «testimonio» —the first of the book (Martín García y AVA, 2005: 19)—. The framing already makes clear that her abortion is not narrated as a free decision, but as the result of a violent relationship. She has suffered «maltrato» and been coerced into abortion by her partner, something the volume presents as a frequent phenomenon, though too often «silenciado» (2005: 19). More concretely, Lucía describes a pattern of emotional manipulation, economic dependency and open threat: «no tenía dinero, dependía de él […] no tenía amigas […] Sólo a él» (19). At first the partner reassures her, then pressures her, and finally threatens her directly with the end of the relationship: «Si tienes al niño te voy a dejar» (19). For her, this is an existential threat.

Equally striking is the way in which the procedure itself is narrated as bodily mutilation and an act of violence. Lucía goes to the clinic, as she repeatedly emphasises, under massive pressure because she «no quería hacerlo» (20). She does not describe the aspiration procedure in neutral medical terms, but in the language of violent removal: «es como si te arrancaran un trozo» and «sientes que te están arrancando parte de tu cuerpo»

(20). Abortion thus appears not as a controlled medical procedure, but as the destruction of one's own body. Lucía also binds her experience to a semantics of guilt: «[n]o quiero olvidar mi aborto: es algo que hice mal y lo asumo» (21). At the same time, abortion is criminalised through language and compared to murder: «como cuando se mata a alguien» (21). What follows for Lucía are depressive episodes, alcohol abuse and even a suicide attempt.

What is critical here is not the existence of such experiences, for regret, traumatisation or experiences of violence are also realities of abortion, pregnancy and motherhood, but rather the structural one-sidedness of the volume. Divergent experiences and interpretations are not an option, there is no space for plurality. Even where coercion, violence and the truly miserable life circumstances of the protagonists are addressed, abortion is not discussed as a symptom of social vulnerability or gender-based violence, but is presented as the catastrophe proper, overshadowing all other causes or structural problems that might have led to the miserable situation in the first place.

3. CONCLUSION: «THE WORST THING ABOUT SHAME IS THAT YOU THINK YOU ARE THE ONLY ONE FEELING IT»

To conclude, the texts examined here do far more than simply add abortion and miscarriage to an already existing concept of motherhood. Rather, they fundamentally reshape what motherhood can mean. Read together, they reveal that motherhood is not a stable identity grounded exclusively in birth, biological continuity or the successful completion of pregnancy. Instead, it emerges as a relational, contested and often fractured field of experience that also encompasses interruption, loss, refusal, ambivalence and mourning.

What is particularly striking across the corpus is the way literary form itself participates in this reconfiguration. Autofictional writing, diaries, letters, testimonies and anthologies do not simply represent reproductive loss; they create narrative spaces in which experiences long considered unspeakable become shareable. In Bonet's work, intimate forms of writing transform miscarriage into a relational experience that links individual grief to female genealogies and collective memory. In *Maternidades cuir*, each of the stories challenges biologically and heteronormatively defined models of family and motherhood. *Código Rosa*, meanwhile, demonstrates how the anthology form collectivises individual abortion experiences and turns them into a polyphonic archive of reproductive lives. Even texts that frame abortion primarily through trauma and regret testify to the centrality of reproductive

experience within contemporary debates on motherhood and the circulation of knowledge, albeit from a markedly different ideological position.

Seen from this perspective, the significance of these narratives extends beyond the representation of abortion or miscarriage themselves. They function as literary counter-discourses that contest the biopolitical, medical and moral frameworks through which reproductive experiences have traditionally been regulated and interpreted. By reclaiming authority over the narration of reproductive loss, they return meaning to the experiencing subject while simultaneously situating that subject within wider networks of kinship, solidarity and memory. At the same time, the texts examined here point towards a field that is far from exhausted. The growing visibility of abortion and miscarriage in contemporary Spanish and Latin American literature suggests that reproductive loss is increasingly becoming a central site for negotiating questions of embodiment, kinship, care, autonomy and social belonging. Therefore, a stronger engagement with questions of reproductive justice, disability, class, race and gender diversity, all of which shape reproductive experience in different ways, would be very important for future research. Such perspectives would further illuminate how contemporary literature participates in ongoing cultural debates about who is recognised as a mother, whose losses become publicly grievable and which reproductive experiences remain at the margins of collective visibility.

Perhaps this is ultimately one of the most important functions of these texts. They challenge the isolation that so often accompanies experiences of abortion and miscarriage by transforming private experiences into narratives that can be shared, recognised and remembered. In doing so, they create points of connection between individual stories and larger communities of experience, offering a literary response to cultures and politics of silence and shame. Or, as Annie Ernaux writes in *La honte*[3]: «[t]he worst thing about shame is that you think you are the only one feeling it» (2011: 256).

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[3] The reference here is to the collection *Écrire la vie* (2011), which also includes *La honte*.

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